REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 4-17 are in the application and stand rejected.

Claims 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Steinberg et al. US 6,433,818 ("Steinberg") in view of Teng et al. WO 00/38099 ("Teng"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is drawn to a novel electronic apparatus with a fingerprint reading unit. Claim 13 is for a fingerprint reading and authentication method. Both claims call for a fingerprint reading unit having a stamping area where the operator contacts a finger to provide a fingerprint for authentication. For improved resolution of the fingerprint image, the stamping area comprises a semi-transparent film. See the specification paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7.

Steinberg relates to a digital camera that includes a biometric security device. The security device limits access to the digital camera functions if the biometric feature of the camera user does not match biometric features pre-registered in the camera's database. The biometric security device of Steinberg can be positioned in the view finder and/or shutter control button of the digital camera. This conveniently facilitates obtaining the biometric features of the camera user because the act of photographing a subject typically requires placing the iris of the eye close to the view finder lens and placing a finger on the control button.

The Office Action properly concludes that Steinberg does not teach a stamping area comprising a semi-transparent film. It is said that Teng suggests applying a semi-transparent film to the stamping area to overcome certain potential problems with a glass stamping area. Thus the Action maintains that it would

have been obvious to incorporate a semi-transparent film of Teng into Steinberg's disclosure to arrive at the claimed invention. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Teng does not anywhere teach that a semi-transparent film should be placed at the imaging surface 118 (the stamping area). Teng only discloses that one or two layers of transparent material should be placed at the imaging surface. Teng describes optical quality of the material placed between the patterned object (e.g., finger) and the light refractor/prism surface only as "transparent". See for example page 6, lines 15 and 23, page 12, lines 4 and 8, and claims 1 (line 10) and 5 (line 1).

The semi-transparent film of the claims is not transparent. The term "transparent" means "having the property of transmitting light without appreciable scattering so that bodies lying beyond are seen clearly". See Meriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Ed. p. 1255 (copy appended). On the other hand, the term "semi-transparent" means "imperfectly transparent". See Meriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Ed. p. 1065 (copy appended). That is, the stamping area material of these claims is optically less than transparent. Alternatively said, semi-transparent involves light transmission with some scattering such that objects beyond are seen less than perfectly clearly.

Teng also points out that some transparent materials which include natural and synthetic rubbers can break down and become brittle and or clouded as a result of exposure to adhesive solvent vapors. As such, the brittle and or clouded transparent materials then cease enhancing fingerprint image contrast and sharpness (page 5, lines 18-25). Hence Teng is construed to teach that non-rigorously transparent material, such as semi-

transparent film, is detrimental to accurate fingerprint reading.

The detailed description provides further evidence of the distinction between semi-transparency and transparency. On page 6, line 30 applicant includes paper such as traditional Japanese paper among suitable stamping area materials. It is well known that semi-transparent paper is not optically transparent like clear glass, for example. Thus a semi-transparent film is distinctly different from a clear transparent film.

Semi-transparent material for the stamping area is not a mere obvious difference from a transparent material. In both this invention and the prior art, one seeks to obtain a high contrast, accurate fingerprint image of quality effective to uniquely characterize the fingerprint for identity authentication purposes. Teng teaches the skilled practitioner that even a seemingly smooth stamping area surface such as ground glass can have surface imperfections (i.e., pits) which interfere with capturing a fingerprint (page 3, lines 25-30). It is counter-intuitive to substitute a partially light scattering, semi-transparent film in place of a transparent material through which the image is to be captured. Given the teaching of Teng that the intermediate material should be transparent, one of ordinary skill would not be induced to use an imperfectly transparent material.

In brief, Teng advocates placing a transparent material on the fingerprint capturing surface. It does not teach using a semi-transparent film as asserted by the office action. Teng further stands for teaching that the transparent material should not degrade to a cloudy condition. Teng's insistence upon high quality, stably transparent material implies that semi-transparent film would be unacceptable for fingerprint

capturing. Teng would not have made it obvious to incorporate a semi-transparent film in the fingerprint reading unit of Steinberg to arrive at the present invention. Applicants therefore urge that claims 1 and 13 are not obvious over the cited references.

Claims 4, 7, 8, 10 and 14 depend either directly or indirectly from claims 1 and 13 and recite additional limitations. These narrower claims should also be patentable over Steinberg in view of Teng by dependency. Hence, applicant submits that it is unnecessary to address the Examiner's specific grounds for rejection of these claims presently.

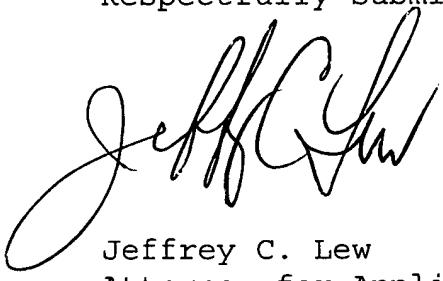
Rejections of claims 2, 5-6, 9, 11-12, 15, 16 and 17 each are grounded upon a combination of references that includes Steinberg and Teng.

- Claim 2 stands rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Frieder.
- Claims 5-6 stand rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Rios.
- Claim 9 stands rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Morrison.
- Claims 11-12 stand rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Siddoway.
- Claim 15 stands rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Stewart.
- Claim 16 stands rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Stewart and Nyyssonen.
- Claim 17 stands rejected as being obvious over Steinberg in view of Teng and further in view of Stewart and Frieder.

Claims 2, 5-6, 9, 11-12, 15, 16 and 17 all depend either directly or indirectly from claims 1 or 13. They recite additional limitations which render them narrower in scope than the their independent claims. None of the additional references teach or suggest that a semi-transparent film should be positioned at the fingerprint stamping surface. Accordingly, applicant asserts that these claims are patentably nonobvious over the respectively cited prior art by dependency and that it is not necessary to address the specific grounds for rejection at this time.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that all of the pending claims are not obvious by the cited art and respectfully requests that they be allowed at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



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